

Camp Massasoit gets political

By LISA DIMAIO

It was a close mayoral race, but Ethan Richardson, 9, pulled out a victory and was dubbed the mayor of Camp Massasoit, winning by just one vote. He was smart and didn't try some of the tactics of his opponents.

"[I think I won] because I didn't try bribing anyone," Ethan said. "One kid said that [the campers] could have \$200 and another kid promised ice cream."

Once in office, one of his first tasks as mayor is to organize – with the campers – a bombardment of water balloons at waterfront director Rob Houston. The second thing he is going to do is ask the campers what they want to do, which he suspects will be all-day swimming.

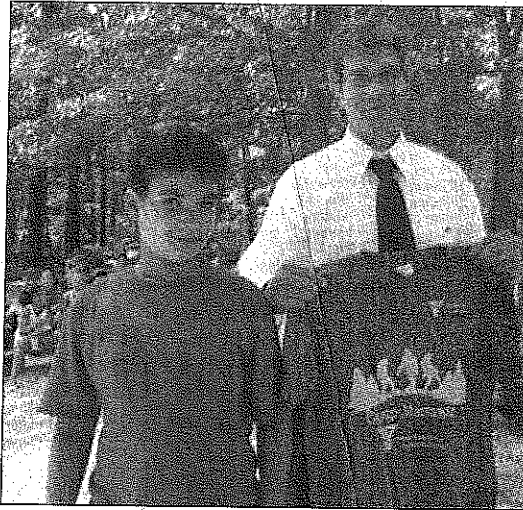
His term will last for the duration of the summer, and some of his other duties will include weekly meetings with the waterfront director and program coordinator. During these meetings, he will be the voice of campers and express any thoughts or concerns they may have regarding their daily activities.

Last Friday, Richardson was officially sworn into office by Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena. As an added bonus, other mayors, past and present, from surrounding cities and towns were invited to talk to the campers and discuss their job. The list included former Cranston Mayor John O'Leary, Providence Mayor David Ciccilini, Polisena and Mayor Michael Napolitano.

When asked what was the best advice he received during the mayoral visits Richardson said, "[To] make sure I don't promise stuff that I can't do" – sound advice from Mayor Polisena.

Throughout Napolitano's visit last Monday, he spoke in great detail about being a mayor and fielded questions from the curious campers.

Napolitano asked how many were from Cranston – a large number of campers raised their hands. He then asked how many attended the fireworks at the high school on the Fourth of July; more campers raised their hands. He really got the campers excited when he asked how many would like to see them again – they started screaming "Yeah!"



Mayor of Camp Massasoit Ethan Richardson stands with Mayor Napolitano during a recognition of the mayoral office. (Photo by Lisa DiMaio)

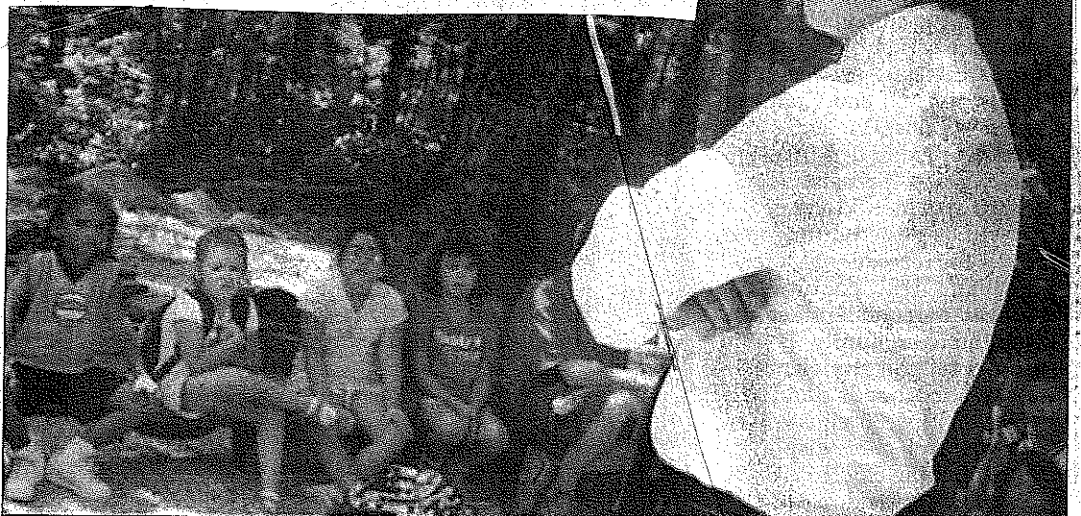
Napolitano said, "That's enough for me [to hear]."

One boy asked how old he was and Napolitano responded, "How old do you think I am?" The kids began screaming numbers out like 78 and 100. He cleared the air, though, and told the campers he is 50.

He talked about the vigorous campaigning he had to do in order to create name recognition with the citizens of Cranston and added that he blew out 17 pairs of shoes in the process. But he had a goal, set his mind to something that he really wanted and was willing to work hard for it – the same message he wanted to get across to the campers.

"I decided I was going to do some good and serve the community," said Napolitano. "I wanted to make a better place for my children."

Richardson plans to take all the good advice he received from the mayors that visited and hopefully he will be able to follow up with his promise to the campers that elected him mayor: all-day swimming.



In honor of the mayor-elect of Camp Massasoit, area mayors, including Mayor Michael Napolitano, visited the campers to talk about the importance of leadership and personal stories surrounding the office. (Photo by Lisa DiMaio)

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